

# THURINGIA

*A journey into  
heritage and nature*

*Stories of castles and palaces,  
forests and cities and a wealth  
of world heritage sites*



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# Welcome

Thuringia is not for everyone. But may be for you!

Wartburg Castle and other UNESCO-listed treasures are awaiting you here. Princely palaces and gardens, poets' and philosophers' homes, medieval Jewish heritage sites, and the places of early Bauhaus history form an impressive package for culture and history fans. Nature lovers find quite a choice of beautiful landscapes, including ancient forests, blossoming mountain meadows, water reservoirs and rivers. Explorers can follow our insider tips, such as Merchants' Bridge in Erfurt or the "Porcelain Experience" at Leuchtenburg Castle. And the best is, you don't have to make tough choices. You can have it all in one itinerary! Thuringia is a region of short distances, well connected and well accessible at the heart of Germany. Welcome to Thuringia.

# Beautiful Wartburg

Thuringia may be a small state, but it has a surprising concentration of historic sites. Many of the 400 or so castles and palaces throughout the region have served as the stage for important events. Take Wartburg Castle, for example. For nearly a thousand years, it has been perched atop a mountain high above Eisenach. There is hardly another German castle linked to as many legends and as much great history. Student fraternities celebrated German

unity in the grand hall, and the most famous minstrels of the 13th century gathered here for singers' contests and centuries later, the reformer Martin Luther found refuge in the castle. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Richard Wagner are also closely associated with these historical walls. Wartburg is a focal point of German history and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1999.

Fantastic  
castles and  
palaces

The stone castle lies quietly under a pale moon, framed by the dark backdrop of the Thuringian Forest. A few minutes ago, the last sound of the “Tannhäuser” faded away in the grand hall. The Wagner opera belongs to the castle like the doves in the courtyard and the cross on the castle keep. It was the result of a coincidental stop of Wagner in Eisenach in April 1842, when he fell for the charm of the castle. The sight inspired him so much that he made it the setting for his opera “Tannhäuser and the Singers” Contest at Wartburg Castle’.



Luther Room at Wartburg Castle, where Luther began his Bible translation.

## Wagner’s opera is regularly performed at the castle.

The opera tells the story of the knight Tannhäuser, who, during a singers’ festival at Wartburg, attempts to win the heart of Elisabeth, the daughter of the landgrave. In front of all those present, he confesses to having previously indulged in forbidden carnal pleasures in a mountain called Venusberg. The crowd is outraged, and Tannhäuser is expelled from Wartburg Castle. He sets off for Rome to ask the Pope for forgiveness for his sins. The happy ending is, however, only limited: both Elisabeth and Tannhäuser die, but find each other again in heaven. Wagner’s opera is also regularly performed at the castle as a fairy-tale story for children, with the Venus Grotto exchanged for a forbidden-apple tree.

Three centuries before Wagner, the castle was used by Martin Luther as a hiding place from the opponents of the Reformation. Among other endeavours, he passed his time translating the New Testament from Greek into German. This was a difficult task, because there was no such thing as standard German at that time. There were many dialects, where not only the sound made the difference, but also the vocabulary. Luther “looked the people in the mouth”, a German idiom, and drew on all the dialects to create a universally understandable version. This was a true masterpiece, and incidentally, the starting signal for a unified German language.

### Wartburg Castle in Eisenach

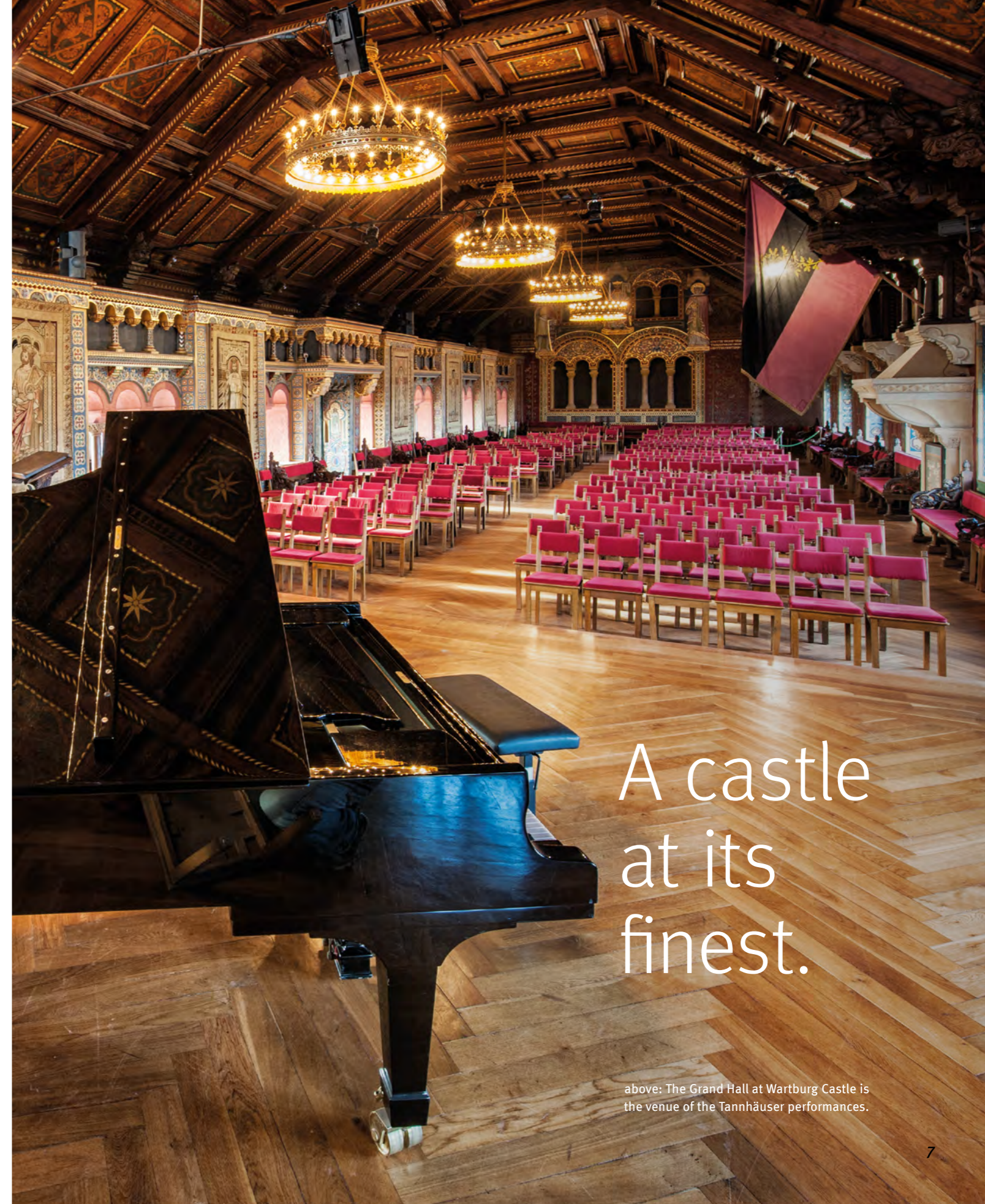
*The UNESCO World Heritage Site Wartburg Castle is open all year round. Visitors can experience the premises of the castle through personal tours or with digital assistance on their own smartphones. The Wartburg Art Chamber with its approximately 9,000 pieces is also part of the tour. For reasons of monument protection, unfortunately, the visit is only partially wheelchair accessible for guests with mobility restrictions. [wartburg.de](http://wartburg.de)*

### Thuringia’s Luther’s Country

*Wartburg Castle in Eisenach is just one of numerous places of Reformation history in Thuringia. As a young schoolboy, Martin Luther sang in the Kurrende choir on the streets of Eisenach, achieved academic honours at the venerable University of Erfurt and also became a monk and priest in Erfurt. Authentic locations and the historical atmosphere of Thuringian cities still provide a glimpse of how things were here in the early 16th century. [luther-land.com](http://luther-land.com)*

| [wartburg.de](http://wartburg.de)

Wartburg Castle.  
Truly fascinating



A castle  
at its  
finest.

above: The Grand Hall at Wartburg Castle is the venue of the Tannhäuser performances.

Altenstein House, the summer residence of the Saxe-Meiningen Dukes

# Palaces and castles wherever you go.

Out of the around 400 castles and palaces in Thuringia, we have chosen four special tips for you.

For more castles, palaces and gardens please visit

[thueringerschloesser.de](http://thueringerschloesser.de)



01

## 01 | Royal history at Friedenstein

*Friedenstein Castle in Gotha is Germany's largest early baroque palace complex and named "castle" for historical reasons. The massive building appears rather plain from the outside. Inside, however, a magnificent flight of rooms from Baroque to Classicism awaits the visitors, along with the world's oldest fully intact baroque theatre and stories about the ducal family's links with most European dynasties.*

[stiftungfriedenstein.de](http://stiftungfriedenstein.de)

## 02 | Wish-making at Leuchtenburg

*Leuchtenburg is a typical, and rather picturesque, German hilltop castle. And it can make wishes come true! A tour through the multi-sensory and interactive exhibition "The Porcelain Experience" takes you through myths, legends and the history of the "white gold", and finally to the Skywalk of Wishes. How does this work? Take a look at [leuchtenburg.de](http://leuchtenburg.de)*



03

## 03 | Intimate encounter with Kochberg palace

*Few would say no to such a neat home in the countryside – the little Renaissance palace Kochberg used to be the country residence of the von Stein family, of whom Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was a frequent guest. Surrounded by a secluded moat and with its lovingly restored rooms, it exudes an almost intimate atmosphere. And the palace garden, where the poet revelled with the lady of the house, is a real gem of garden art. Look for more information at [klassik-stiftung.de](http://klassik-stiftung.de).*

## 04 | Laughing out loud in Greiz

*"The house of the beautiful retreat" (Maison de belle retraite) was the name Prince Henry XI. Reuß gave his summer palace in Greiz. It was a place to be close to nature and the scene of lordly merrymaking. Even today, the old walls are full of fun, for example in the "Satiricum", an exhibition of historical caricatures from the 17th to the 20th century. Let go and laugh out loud. Humour has no expiry date. [sommerpalais-greiz.de](http://sommerpalais-greiz.de)*



02



04

# Hiking on Rennsteig trail

Thuringia's  
nature

Germany's most famous long-distance hiking trail stretches for about 170 km along the heights of the Thuringian Forest. Its landscape is marked by vast forests, flowering mountain meadows, picturesque high moors and dreamy villages. The region is unspoilt and

pristine. Those who find the entire trail too long can also go on shorter circular tours or discover the side valleys via the "Rennsteig ladders". Over and over you can find places to be alone in nature. Beautiful perspectives!



A place above the Thuringian Forest - in the sky, above the treetops, on stones. The small rocky outcrop named Seiffartsburg is situated on the Gipfelweg, or summit trail, in the Thuringian Forest. It is shown very small on the hiking map. Maybe that's why you are usually all alone up here. And what a place for a picnic: bread rolls, apples, Thuringian sausages, all served with a 360-degree panorama – there couldn't be a better place!

## An idyll in the highlands

We are on the Gipfelweg, a circular hiking trail in the Massif Central of the Thuringian Forest. Beginning in the Suhl district of Goldlauter, it partially follows along the Rennsteig trail and in two days takes you over seven mountains that break the 900-metre mark. It's a demanding tour, but those who make the effort will be amply rewarded with magnificent views.

The path leads over tree roots and meandering creek streams, along steep slopes and through old coniferous forests. Flowering mountain meadows contrast with shady sections of forest. Dense green grass covers the forest floor. It looks lovely and charming, almost as if a fairy would appear at any moment to guide the way to treasure. It certainly wouldn't be surprising in a place like this.

In Schmücke, at 926m the highest settlement on the route, lupines bloom in shades of pink and blue and horses graze in view. An idyll in the highlands.

We are right in the middle of Germany's oldest forest biosphere reserve. Large mixed forests, species-rich mountain meadows and high moors define the landscape. The sounds of modern life seem distant in the rustling of trees and buzzing of bees.

On Schneekopf Mountain, you must climb to more than one thousand metres, but only if you climb to the viewing platform on top. Or you can take a rest at the Neue Gehlberger Hut. There you can enjoy fresh regional cuisine and, weather permitting, on the mountain terrace. The summit is peaceful and spacious, the view magnificent. A few children frolic across freshly mown meadows. Guests squint relaxed into the high-altitude sun. Everyday life has been left behind in the valley.

### *The Rennsteig trail*

*The Rennsteig trail is Germany's oldest, best-known and most popular high-altitude hiking trail. It takes you over roughly 170 km across the peaks of the Thuringian Forest into the Thuringian Slate Mountains. Depending on your level of fitness and your experiences along the way, it takes between 6 and 8 days to complete the whole route. In winter, the hiking trail is also popular with cross-country skiers. Mountain bikers enjoy a challenging parallel course.*

[thuringer-wald.com](http://thuringer-wald.com)

The Rennsteig.  
It's all about the journey.



The Thuringian Forest has various routes for mountain bikers.

The Rhön region comes from a volcanic past and is known for its panoramic views.

# A retreat in nature.

01

In Thuringia, nature lovers will find two UNESCO biosphere reserves, five nature parks and the Hainich National Park. Here we give you 5 tips for taking a break in Thuringia's nature.

## 01 | Counting Stars in the Rhön Mountains

The Rhön region owes its characteristic shape to its volcanic past. Its landscape is marked by gently rising mountains and grandiose vistas. Here you can walk across meadow orchards, past small villages and flocks of sheep and through old juniper groves. At night, a starry sky of incredible splendour lights up – in the Rhön Star Park, an International Dark Sky Reserve. No artificial light source is allowed to dim the night sky here.

[rhoen.info](https://rhoen.info)

## 02 | Border Stories along the Green Belt

The "Green Belt" is a National Natural Monument. It runs round Thuringia from the northwest to the southeast and stretches over 763 km. Once, this was the border belt between West and East Germany, marked by fences, automatic firing ranges and watchtowers. What used to be deserted, no-go areas now forms a unique biotope network. Premium hiking trails provide insights into the history of the border and show how a "death strip" was turned into a "lifeline".

[gruenes-band-monumental.de](https://gruenes-band-monumental.de)

## 02 | An Emperor in the Kyffhäuser Mountain Range

It looks like quite a big mountain, but it is actually Germany's smallest mountain range: the Kyffhäuser! There are many legends associated with it, such as that Emperor Frederick "Barbarossa" has been sleeping inside it for almost 900 years. And indeed, the "mountain" has something mythical about it with its dense forest, ancient castle ruins and the Barbarossa Cave. Those who hike to the very top will actually meet the emperor, larger than life and carved in stone.

[region-suedharz-kyffhaeuser.de](https://region-suedharz-kyffhaeuser.de)

## 03 | Through the Treetops of Hainich National Park

The ancient beech forests of Hainich National Park are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here you can get an idea of what Central Europe looked like at the beginning of our era. Explore the Hainich on cycle paths or hiking trails. Climb the tree-top trail and gain new insights into a fascinating ecosystem or meet the wild cat, the Hainich's signature animal.

[nationalpark-hainich.de](https://nationalpark-hainich.de)

## 04 | By the blue Thuringian Sea

The Thuringians affectionately call the reservoir area around Bleiloch and Hohenwarte their "Thuringian Sea". Here, in Europe's largest contiguous reservoir area, the colour blue dominates. Blue is the water of the Saale and blue-grey the slate of the rocks that are reflected in it. The region's dense forests also seem to be rather blue and green. Athletic hikers with a taste for tranquillity and magnificent views of Nordic landscapes are right at home here. [visit-thuringia.com/nature](https://visit-thuringia.com/nature)

## 05 | Spectacular views in the central Saale valley

The Saale Horizontale route in the central Saale valley is 91 km of pure hiking pleasure. Narrow paths at dizzying heights lead past bright shell limestone rocks and provide spectacular views of the city of Jena, idyllic vineyards, old castles and romantic palaces. In 2023, a national public vote crowned the Saale Horizontale "Germany's most beautiful hiking trail". An insider tip not to be missed! [saale-unstrut-tourismus.de](https://saale-unstrut-tourismus.de)

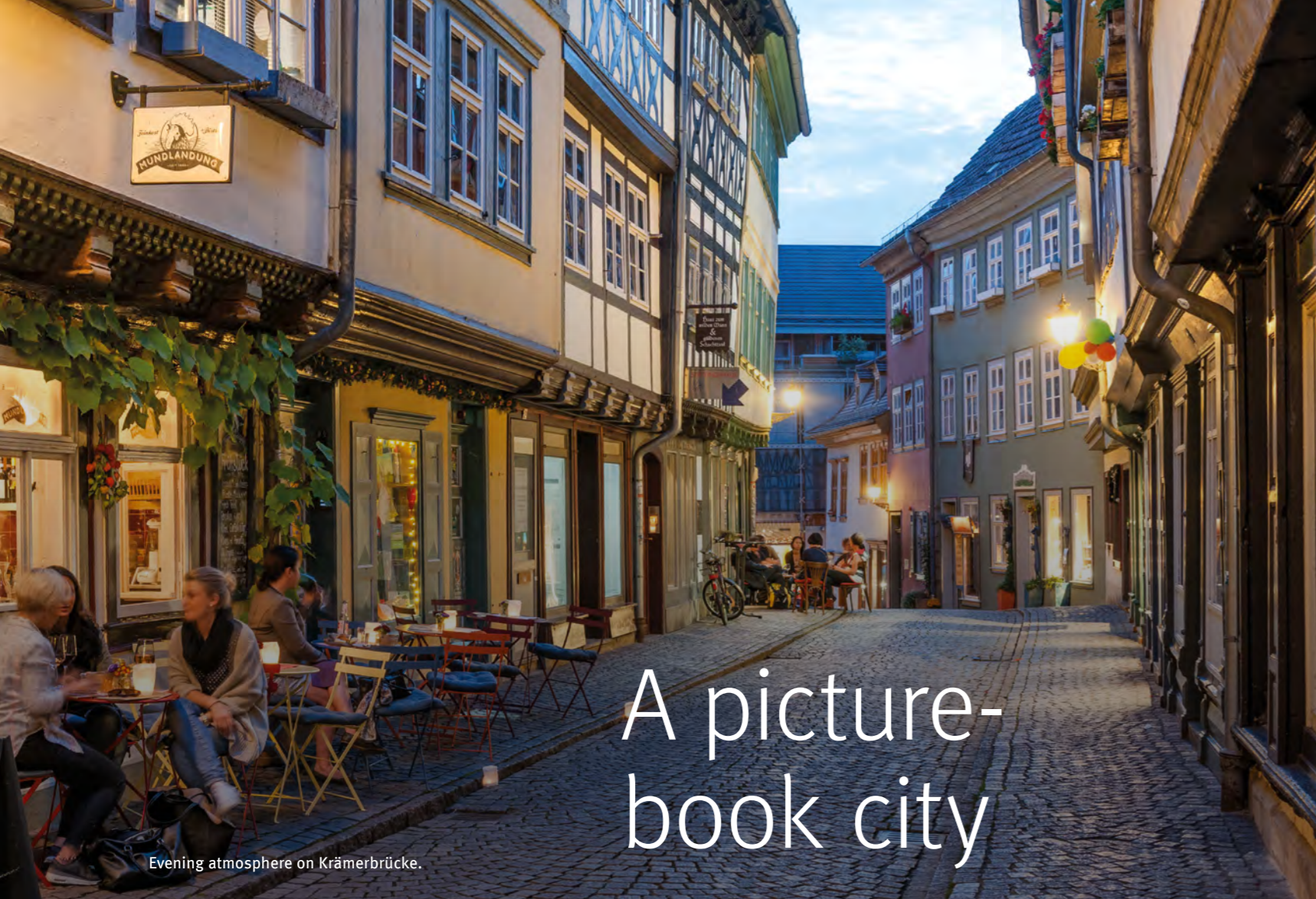


# Welcome to Erfurt

Beautiful  
cities

Erfurt Cathedral, the neo-gothic town hall or the Old Synagogue – the Thuringian state capital Erfurt boasts numerous cultural treasures. The medieval town centre with its winding lanes, shops, cafés and restaurants provides a cosy and welcoming setting.

At the heart of the city lies the Krämerbrücke (Merchants' Bridge) with its lively microcosm of small shops, bistros and artisan workshops. There is no other place in the old town where the flair of historic Erfurt is so tangible.



Evening atmosphere on Krämerbrücke.

# A picture-book city

Historic town houses form one of the most beautiful old towns in Europe. Starting at the ample cathedral square, narrow alleys wind their way through the city, along numerous churches, medieval half-timbered houses and past the neo-Gothic town hall from the 1870s at Fischmarkt square. And without really noticing it, you suddenly stand in the middle of a bridge: Krämerbrücke.

Krämerbrücke owes its name to the merchants who sold goods classified as “Kram” to travellers along the via regia, the trade route from east to west. Kram was a name for small, valuable things like spices, gold, silver or silk. Today the bridge is a historical gem with cute little shops and galleries. With the choice of creative products available, it is difficult to find only one suitable souvenir here. The bridge is a microcosm with

a unique attitude towards life. It carries 32 half-timbered houses – 32 small worlds – and has enough space for artisans, creative people and unusual business ideas.

About 50 people live on the bridge and everyone knows each other – a feeling that is also conveyed to visitors. There is the doll maker Martin Gobsch, who you can watch at work in his workshop. Next door is “Erfurter Blau”, a boutique that sells traditional woad-dyed products. Erfurt owes its wealth in the Middle Ages to the production of blue dyes. Chocolatier Alex Kühn, who operates the Goldhelm chocolate manufactory, tempts you with his unusual ice cream creations and chocolate bridge truffles. And near Hartmut Priemer’s bakery at the western end of the bridge, the heavenly smell of fresh rolls and bread immediately



left: The Old Synagogue of Erfurt is a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site.

down: The Danakil climate zone house is a surprising addition to the traditional egapark exhibition.



finds its way to your nose. Baking is a traditional process here: by hand, using old recipes and products from the region.

So, what do you fancy? A box of chocolates, Thuringian mustard, a blue scarf or a piece of jewellery? On Krämerbrücke you are spoiled for choice. Or you simply come again to stroll across the bridge, driven by pleasant curiosity.

## More tips for your Erfurt tour?

### Discover the city’s Jewish heritage!

A journey of discovery into Erfurt’s Jewish heritage takes you right through the old town and back into the 11th century. Special places like the Old Synagogue and the Mikveh tell stories of everyday Jewish life in the Middle Ages and reveal many a treasure. Since September 2023, these places are part of the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage.

[Juedisches-leben.erfurt.de](http://Juedisches-leben.erfurt.de)

### Follow in Martin Luther’s footsteps!

In Erfurt, Martin Luther studied at the university and became a monk. The city shaped his life. His traces stretch from the Latin Quarter to the Augustinian Monastery and to St. Mary’s Cathedral, where he was ordained a priest in 1507.

[luther-land.com](http://luther-land.com)

### Enjoy the “Garden of Thuringia”!

Erfurt’s success as a horticultural city began in the 18th century. And Erfurt is also home to Thuringia’s largest garden: the egapark. Several themed areas such as the rose, dahlia and Japanese gardens, the Danakil climate zone house and lots of entertainment for younger guests offer enough entertainment for a whole day.

[egapark-erfurt.de](http://egapark-erfurt.de)

| [Erfurt-tourismus.de](http://Erfurt-tourismus.de)

48h Erfurt.  
Awake your curiosity.



# More towns and stories



01

Thuringia's towns are many things - historic, cosy and full of different stories. You will look in vain for large metropolises here. Nevertheless, alongside the breath of history, the wind of renewal is also present. Have a look at our tips for you.

More on  
[thuringer-staedte.de](https://thuringer-staedte.de)

## 01 | Altenburg

*It's hard to get much further east than this in Thuringia. And those who venture this far are rewarded by a pearl of an old town with an imposing residential castle that houses the Castle and Playing Cards Museum. Altenburg is the birthplace of Skat and the seat of the International Skat Court!*

[altenburg.travel](https://altenburg.travel)

## Cycle Route "Chain of Thuringian Towns"

*The long-distance cycle route connects seven of Thuringia's prettiest towns, from Eisenach, via Gotha, Erfurt, Weimar, Jena and Gera to Altenburg. Along the route are castles and palaces, historical places and beautiful landscapes..*

[thuringer-staedtekette.de](https://thuringer-staedtekette.de)



02



03

## 02 | Jena

*Thuringia's traditional university town scores with magnificent views from shell limestone cliffs, its location in the romantic Saale Valley, Goethe, Schiller and innovative minds like Zeiss, Schott and Abbe. Reach for the stars or experience fantastic music shows in the spectacular Zeiss Planetarium.*

[visit-jena.de](https://visit-jena.de)

## 03 | Schmalkalden

*Schmalkalden boasts picturesque half-timbered houses and an idyllic location on the southern edge of the Thuringian Forest. At Wilhelmsburg Castle, you can find out how a passion for a woman brought down the League of Protestant Princes, and at Viba Nougatwelt, there's plenty of chocolate to put on your hips.*

[schmalkalden.com](https://schmalkalden.com)



04



05

## 04 | Bad Langensalza

*Rose Garden, Japanese Garden, Magnolia Garden or Castle Park? The traditional Thuringian spa town is known for its gardens. Visitors can choose between altogether nine thematic gardens, and the town is the eastern gate to the Hainich National Park, a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site.*

[badlangensalza.de/tourismus](https://badlangensalza.de/tourismus)

## 05 | Mühlhausen

*A long history as a medieval Free Imperial city and a well-preserved old-town district. Mühlhausen was at the centre of important historical events and is home to the German Peasants War Museum. The municipal archives hold valuable historical documents such as J. S. Bach's employment contract from 1707.*

[muehlhausen.de/tourismus](https://muehlhausen.de/tourismus)

# Weimar's world heritage

Amazing Heritage

Thuringia is home to a wealth of World Heritage sites. Nowhere else in the state is this more strikingly evident than in Weimar, where altogether there are 16 sites from the UNESCO World Heritage list. The city compels you to choose:

Embrace a more classical experience or follow in the footsteps of the Bauhaus? Stay longer or come back again? We take a look at four Weimar personalities and stories that have shaped the town.

### **Anna Amalia. A woman takes the lead**

The year is 1756, and the 16-year-old Prussian princess Anna Amalia has arrived in the village-like town of Weimar to marry the young duke. Her happiness is short-lived; at 19, she is already a widow and has responsibility for 2 children and a troubled duchy. Despite the unfavourable starting conditions, she faces the challenge. She persuades the emperor in Vienna to recognise her regency, promotes art and culture and paves the way for Weimar's "Golden Age". The small town on the Ilm river subsequently develops into a European cultural metropolis.

On the trail of the duchess dowager: City Palace, Wittumspalais, Duchess Anna Amalia Library, the palaces and gardens in Tiefurt, Belvedere and Ettersburg.

### **Johann Wolfgang Goethe. A poet dominates the scene**

When the young Goethe travels to Weimar on the invitation of Duke Carl August, he believes he will only be staying for a short period of time. It ends up being almost 60 years. Goethe is 26 when he arrives in the city and already well known as a poet. In Weimar he enters the civil service. He reorganises the finances of the duchy, reforms the civil service and becomes the most important man in the state after the duke. There is hardly a place where you do not encounter him, now and then. He lives in the house on Frauenplan street for almost 50 years. Even today, his spirit still reverberates through the building's rooms. Furniture, letters, souvenirs from the poet's travels, his private library and his house garden provide a glimpse of Goethe the man and his many interests.

Eye to eye with the poet: Residence on Frauenplan street, Garden House in the Park on the Ilm. Goethe and Schiller Archive.

### **Franz Liszt. A superstar creates a stir**

A little more than a hundred years after J. S. Bach, another great musician comes to Weimar in the middle of the 19th century: Franz Liszt – composer, conductor, pianist, music pedagogue and superstar of the scene. After a few initial short-term visits, he is repeatedly drawn back to the town on the Ilm. The duke and his wife support him and his art. He experiences his most artistically productive phases in Weimar and publicly lives out his scandalous affair with Princess Caroline zu Sayn-Wittgenstein. The lady is married, but not to him. Their shared flat, the Villa Altenburg, becomes a meeting place for visitors such as Johannes Brahms, Robert Schumann, Hector Berlioz and Richard Wagner.

Looking for the superstar: The Liszt House at Ilm Park, the German National Theatre and the Weimar State Orchestra, the "Franz Liszt" Academy of Music.

### **Walter Gropius. The Bauhaus people break with conventions**

After the First World War, many things are in upheaval, including in Weimar. Walter Gropius is nominated by Henry van de Velde for the post of director of the Academy of Fine Arts. The School of Applied Arts is integrated and Gropius gives the institution a new name: "Staatliches Bauhaus". Modernity has come to Weimar. Artists such as Feininger, Itten, Klee, Kandinsky and Schlemmer come into town and leave their mark on the creative workshops of the Bauhaus. Dancing in the park, women studying, glittering costume parties – the Bauhaus people attract attention and shock the well-behaved bourgeoisie at the beginning of the 20th century.

Traces of the Bauhausers: Bauhaus University Weimar, Bauhaus Museum Weimar, Haus Am Horn, Feininger cycle path in the countryside.



The Duchess Anna Amalia Library houses over one million historical books and scriptures.

# World heritage tips in Weimar

01

## 01 | Classical Weimar

Probably the most famous flagship of the “Classical Weimar” (Klassisches Weimar) ensemble is the Duchess Anna Amalia Library. Visitors are especially drawn to the picturesque rococo hall. The books cannot be taken off the shelves here, but you can browse through them digitally with the free Weimar+ app. Those looking for a more visual experience can visit “Cranach’s Floods of Images” (Cranachs Bilderfluten). The exhibition gives visitors a look at the most productive artist’s workshop of the Renaissance, where paintings, book illustrations, coins and more are on display.

## 02 | Henry van de Velde

The Belgian architect and designer Henry van de Velde started working in Weimar in 1902. With his distinct style, he left a lasting imprint on the applied arts of his time. His extensive work covers many aspects of everyday life, from architecture to everyday objects. He designed his Weimar residence, the Hohe Pappeln House, down to the smallest detail, just like the museum ensemble of the Nietzsche House in Weimar. Van de Velde’s work and early modernism are the centrepiece of a large permanent exhibition at the Neues Museum Weimar.

## 03 | Parks and gardens

Weimar is more of a park with a city than a city with a park, or so it is said. The Park on the Ilm is proof of this. In the 48-hectare landscaped garden on the outskirts of the old town, Duke Carl August and Johann Wolfgang Goethe brought their ideas to life. Goethe’s garden house is therefore also located here. Evidence of love is provided by the historical cemetery. It is here where Duke Carl Friedrich and Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna rest in sarcophagi that are right next to each other but in two different buildings. To achieve this, the duke arranged for an opening to be made in the wall between the adjacent buildings. In this way, no wall can separate the lovers.

## 04 | Birthplace of Bauhaus

At the birthplace of the Bauhaus movement, the Bauhaus Museum Weimar exhibits the treasures of the world’s oldest Bauhaus collection. The museum is much more than a collection of objects and tells the story of how the “Bauhausers” lived and how they saw the world. Just a short stroll away is the Haus Am Horn, the first model house in the Bauhaus style, which in 1923 introduced a new way of living to an astonished public.

More information on Weimar’s classical and Bauhaus heritage is available on [klassik-stiftung.de](http://klassik-stiftung.de)



In Goethe's Weimar residence on Frauenplan street.



02



03



04

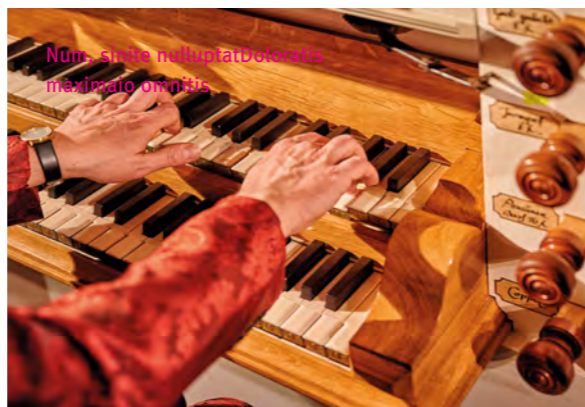
# A family named Bach

Musical history

For well over 200 years, the Bach family shaped the musical life in Thuringia. They provided countless church organists, town musicians and court conductors. Their influence was so great that town musicians in Erfurt were, for a while, simply called “Bachs”, a habit that was maintained long after the last

of this name had left office. The chronology of the Bach family of musicians was taken down by its most famous member: Johann Sebastian Bach. He was born in Eisenach in 1685, where today the museum in the Bach House and Georgenkirche commemorate him.

The toccata begins, and the sounds fill the nave. Suddenly, everything feels bigger and wider. Your life, your soul and this very moment are all here. Jörg Reddin, organist at the Bachkirche in Arnstadt, sits at the organ and plays Bach. He pulls stops, presses the foot pedal and his hands glide over the keys – where the young composer often sat over 300 years before. In 1703, he assumed his first organist position here. “Johann Sebastian Bach had three organ services per week,” says Reddin, “but today there is more to do in this position: concerts, guided tours – not only church services.” Reddin laughs; for him, it’s okay. He sees the work in Arnstadt as a challenge. “There are not many direct Bach successors,” explains Reddin.



## Bach’s music comes of age in Arnstadt

Today, anyone who enters the Bach Church in Arnstadt and sits down on one of the white-painted pews may, with a bit of luck, get to hear Reddin’s organ playing. It’s a sound that takes you straight back to the early 18th century. The mighty, white-gold instrument is a true-to-detail reconstruction of the organ on which Bach played in his day. “320 of the 1,250 pipes have survived,” Reddin says of the organ built by Johann Friedrich Wender as he becomes enthusiastic. The Wender organ therefore has more character than other organs. “There are a few minor impurities in some keys, but they make its sound more lively.” Impurities in this case means: the organ is breathing and does not yet have the standardised sound of today’s instruments. This is comparable to a vinyl record as opposed to a CD.

Bach only worked in Arnstadt for four years, yet he left ample traces behind. His position as an organist provided ample time for composing. It is assumed that it is here where he wrote the world-famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor. Bach’s music comes of age in Arnstadt. And so does he. He falls in love with Maria Barbara, his second cousin, and marries her in 1707 in nearby Dornheim.

From Arnstadt, his journey takes him via Mühlhausen to Weimar, to the court of Wilhelm Ernst, Duke of Saxe-Weimar. From the troublemaker of Arnstadt

emerges a family man. Six children are born during the Weimar period, including his sons Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emmanuel. Bach rises from chamber musician and court organist to concertmaster. He writes the Weimar cantatas, plays music and composes in the “Himmelsburg”, the old Weimar Castle Church. At the end of the Weimar period, his temperament resurfaces. Since the duke denies him further advancement, he accepts the better-paid offer of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen. Without informing his Weimar employer. His last weeks in Thuringia are spent in coercive detention in the ducal Bastille.

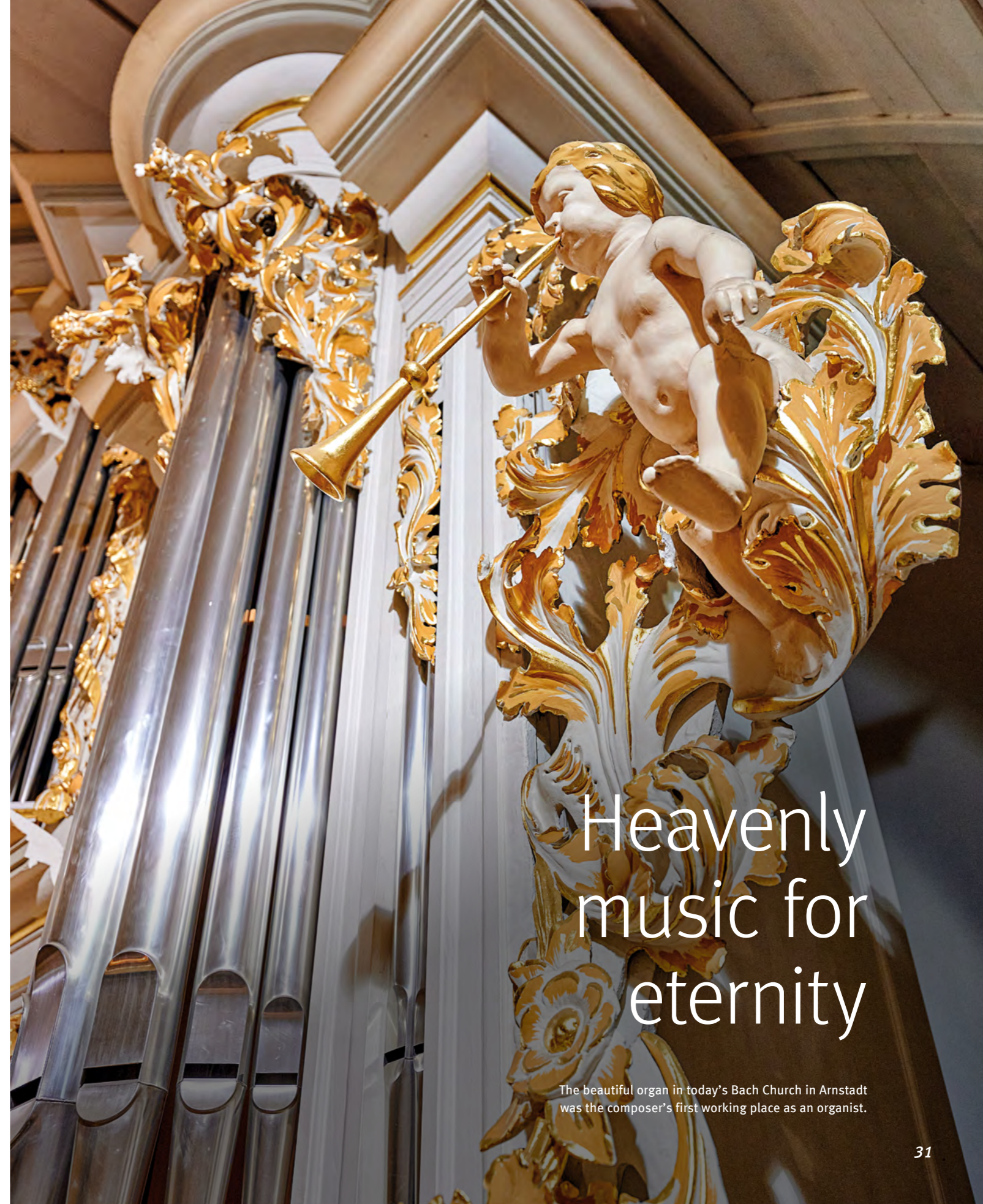
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### **The Thuringian Bach Festival**

*Bach is constantly present in Thuringia, but especially during the annual Thuringian Bach Festival in spring, when his music rings out at some original locations of music history. The international festival impressively shows that Bach is still a superstar. In the performances, the world-famous composer is sometimes blended with dance, electro or jazz.*  
[thueringer-bachwochen.de](http://thueringer-bachwochen.de)

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| [thueringer-bachwochen.de](http://thueringer-bachwochen.de)



Heavenly  
music for  
eternity

The beautiful organ in today’s Bach Church in Arnstadt was the composer’s first working place as an organist.



# Thuringia's Bach places

bach-thueringen.de

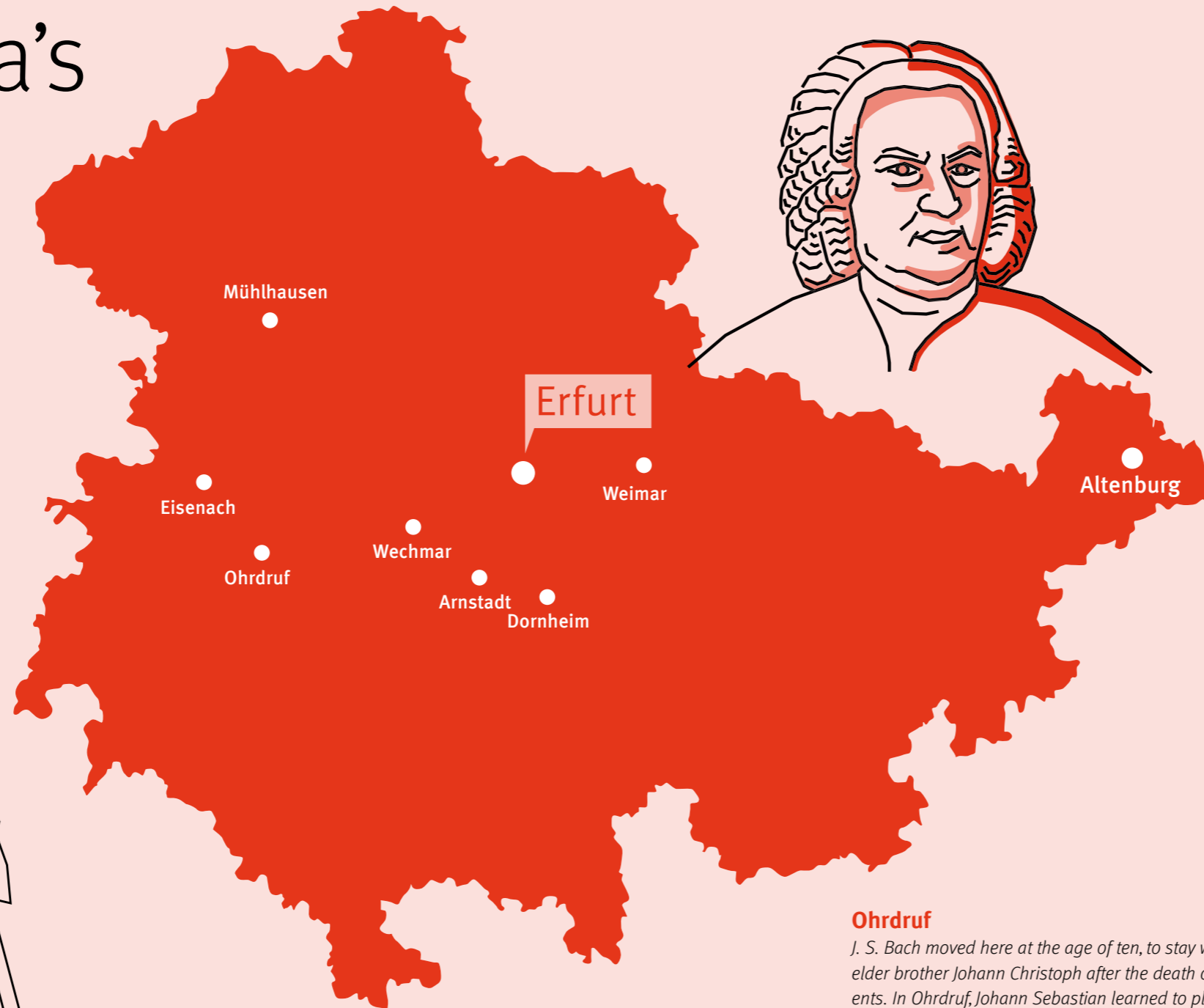


## Wechmar

Home of the earliest documented ancestor of J. S. Bach: Veit Bach. The musically gifted baker was a Lutheran refugee from Hungary and came here in the 16th century. Three of his sons became professional musicians and started the Bach dynasty of musicians.

## Eisenach

Place of birth of J. S. Bach. The Eisenach Bach House is Germany's largest musician's museum. Though not the house of birth, it has a connection with the Bach family. Nearby is St. George's Church with the original baptismal font.



## Ohrdruf

J. S. Bach moved here at the age of ten, to stay with his elder brother Johann Christoph after the death of the parents. In Ohrdruf, Johann Sebastian learned to play instruments such as the piano, the organ and basso continuo and wrote his first organ chorales.

## Arnstadt

First job as an organist and first trouble with the authorities. The young Johann Sebastian reportedly got into fist fights and took "unknown maidens" to the organ balcony. His monumental Toccata and Fugue in D minor was probably written in Arnstadt.

## Dornheim

First wedding. On 17 October 1707, Johann Sebastian and his second cousin, Maria Barbara Bach married at St. Bartholomew in Dornheim. The romantic village church has become a dream wedding destination for music loving couples from all over the world.

## Mühlhausen

More money but a fleeting performance. The newly wed J. S. Bach followed the money from Arnstadt to Mühlhausen, only to leave it again after a few months when the Weimar duke offered him a better position.

## Weimar

Nine productive years. His first six children were born here. And he wrote a lot of music, including his famous Weimar cantatas. His working place was the castle church, nicknamed "Castle of Heaven" (Himmelsburg) for its unusual acoustics.

## Erfurt

A family place. J. S. Bach's parents were Erfurters, just like generations of other Bachs. At Erfurt's Kaufmannskirche (Merchants' Church), more than 100 Bach baptisms, weddings and funeral services were held over the centuries.

## Altenburg

The organ inspector. Bach inspected countless organs in his lifetime. Among them the instrument in the Altenburg castle chapel. He noted that "the organ maker succeeded very well in developing the character and sweetness of every voice."

## Thuringia.MyCulture App

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01

# A Thuringian kaleidoscope

just to complete the picture.

## 01 | Christmas markets

In the four weeks before Christmas Eve they fill the air with the scent of mulled wine and the sound of Christmas carols. Atmospherically set against the background of picturesque oldtowns or medieval castles, they also provide a choice of exceptional handmade gifts such as genuine Lauscha baubles. Lauscha in the Thuringian Forest is the birthplace of glass Christmas decorations, by the way.

[christmas.visit-thuringia.com](http://christmas.visit-thuringia.com)

## 02 | Thuringian Mountain Railway

For more than a hundred years, the Thuringian Mountain Railway has been in service. From the beginning powered by electricity and equipped with an intelligent energy-saving concept. Today it takes visitors on a steep track uphill and across a high plateau into Thuringia's Herb Garden. The area has been known as home of the "Sommerfrische" since the 19th century. The German term means something like „summer resort with fresh climate". What sounds relaxing, is relaxing indeed, especially in hot summers. Breathtaking views included.

[thueringerbergbahn.com](http://thueringerbergbahn.com)



03



02

## 03 | Historical theatre gems

Historical theatre gems include e. g. the Meiningen Court Theatre, birthplace of the modern director's theatre and role model for the Royal Shakespeare Company, or the "Liebhabertheater" at Kochberg castle, which transports people back into the Goethe period. The Ekhof Theatre at Friedenstein Castle is another special place. It is the world's oldest completely preserved and still working baroque theatre. During the summer months it annually comes alive with a baroque festival.

[stiftung-friedenstein/ekhof-theater](http://stiftung-friedenstein/ekhof-theater)



04



05

## 04 | Thuringian bratwurst

For many people the first association with Thuringia! Thuringians are proud of their favourite sausage, which has a documented history dating back to 1404. Traditionally, it comes with mustard and must be prepared on a charcoal grill. And it tastes best in Thuringia, of course.

[visit-thuringia.com](http://visit-thuringia.com)

## 05 | Home of the garden gnomes

The world's last traditional garden gnome factory is at home in a village in the Thuringian Forest. A tradition that started in 1874. The little fellows come in countless sizes, shapes and postures. Some of the moulds have been passed on from generation to generation. A garden gnome museum and a gnome clinic complete the picture. A very special intangible cultural heritage, indeed.

[zwergstatt-graefenroda.de](http://zwergstatt-graefenroda.de)

# Thuringia

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